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Title: Need to restore the subsidy scheme for Ornamental Fish Culture by the Marine Produce Exports Development Authority, Kochi -laid.

SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR (CALICUT): The repeal of the subsidy scheme for Ornamental Fish Culture has, critically impacted the livelihood of those connected with over 1000 mini farms, set up across the country. Under the discontinued scheme offered by the Marine Products Exports Development Authority, Kochi, 50% of Rs. 80,000 - unit cost of a mini farm - was provided as subsidy. This encouraging measure was supplemented by practical oriented training programmes in Ornamental fish Culture, including assisting the farmers in farm designing, breeder selection, breeding, live feed culture, rearing, disease management and marketing, offered to farmers by National Aquariculture Society, Kozhikode. This NGO manned by trainees of the Ornamental Fi~h Culture Training Programme, started by the Trainers Training Centre of CMFRI, Kochi has since January 2003 set up mini farms in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Goa.

The sudden withdrawal of subsidy has hit these small farmers very hard. Debt-stressed farmers, dependent on traditional agriculture are committing suicide on an unprecedented scale in Kerala.

This unilateral decision has dented our efforts in realm of exports. Aggressive promotion will catapult our foreign exchange earnings, a paltry Rs. 6.5 crore out of a Rs. 30,000 crore international market. Domestic market worth Rs. 200 crore and growing at the rate of 12%, also affords ample potential.

Hence, I urge upon the Hon'ble Minister to take up the matter expeditiously.